

City of Worthington

Community Visioning Committee

Monday, September 23, 2019 - 6:00pm – 8:00pm

Worthington Municipal Building, 6550 North High Street, Worthington, OH

Committee Members Present: *Laura Abu-Absi, Kathryn Burris, Paul Cynkar, Cynthia Findlay, Matthew Lees, Jon Melchi, Jack Miner, Austin Mitchell, Don Mottley, Joe Sherman, and Beth Sommer*

Others Present: *Assistant City Manager Robyn Stewart, Law Director Tom Lindsey, Assistant City Clerk Ethan Barnhardt, Lauren Falcone (Poggemeyer Design Group)*

Ms. Falcone convened the meeting at 6:04 p.m.

Ms. Stewart introduced herself and Mr. Lindsey and gave a presentation on Ohio Sunshine Laws, covering public records and open meetings to the Visioning Committee and how it relates to their work throughout this process. She explained that she and Mr. Barnhardt will be attending all meetings to be official keepers of the record. She detailed how all the committee's meetings are public meetings and that includes all committees and subcommittees.

Mr. Lindsey explained the dangers of communicating via email and the danger of using reply-all. A discussion of public business via a majority of the committee can break the Open Meetings Act. Papers that are generated become public records except for personal notes unless they are shared with everyone else. He encouraged the committee to reach out if they have any questions about these topics.

Ms. Stewart said it was important to decide how to contain and capture the committee's records whether that is utilizing Google Drive or Microsoft One Drive.

Mr. Cynkar said there are already a few things out on social media, and he questioned how they should be handled. Ms. Stewart replied that if it is on the City's pages then the Public Information Officer captures and archives those records and conversations. If it is on other sites, staff does monitor some pages. If you see something and know it is a misstatement Mr. Lindsey said to forward it to Ms. Stewart or Ms. Falcone. Ms. Stewart said that the committee can decide how that should be handled.

Ms. Stewart explained how the committee is subject to Ohio Ethics laws. If you have a question about benefitting or have an interest personally, you should contact staff to see if you should be concerned.

Mr. Lindsey noted for members to be conscious of meeting in small groups, that could become a subcommittee that needs to have minutes taken and be noticed.

Ms. Falcone explained that Council said that the Visioning Committee needed to give more input into the scope. She provided the scope of services and explained that the goal is to figure out if this is how the Visioning Committee wants to get public input. The goal is to tell Council what they want to do at their next meeting and for Council to give funding to the scope. Ms. Falcone described the American Planning Association recommendations for a planning process and framework.

Mr. Miner clarified this is less about a question and more about feedback. He explained that one sensitivity came from what level of community engagement there would be. From a feedback standpoint, there is an impression that the stakeholder interviews are the only community engagement.

There should be more of a focus on what is happening later with the other phases at the same level of the stakeholder interviews.

Ms. Falcone explained how we are doing workshops and focus groups. Key interviews are more about getting a base to see where people are at and to give direction of where you have been and where you want to go. The goal is to engage 80% of the residents through various methods. If you want to interview more than 25 people then cost is more of a factor.

Mr. Sherman asked why the Visioning Committee is interviewed as one stakeholder. Ms. Falcone said that there are 25 interviews, but we can do more if it is budgeted. Mr. Sherman said that this is supposed to be something driven by community. There is the perception the Visioning Committee is 1 instead of 13. Ms. Falcone said if you want to do it differently that is not a problem.

Mr. Mottley explained it may be more productive to be a hybrid with a questionnaire as a group to see where we are each coming from. There may also be some things we as individuals do not want to say to the group and maybe there needs to be a method to make individual comments.

Ms. Abu-Absi expressed that this was more about compiling info and she does not want our opinions to outweigh those of the public. There are other opportunities to individually express their input. She is fine with having the committee as one interview.

Ms. Falcone described different ways to do work with data collection and the opportunity to subcontract with Chris Boring to drill into numbers and using the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC).

Mr. Miner suggested if we are using MORPC and then supplementing with Chris Boring, there could be the conversation about saving resources in this area to allocate to other services in the process.

Mr. Melchi cautioned that using MORPC would be pulling data from multiple people, not just one person. They have different people who are knowledgeable on different topics. They're not all working on the same things at the same time.

Ms. Abu-Absi asked if MORPC has data broken down to the Worthington level. Ms. Stewart responded that they can provide regional data and Worthington information specifically.

Mr. Melchi stated that Worthington is not participating in MORPC's current housing study which would give more detailed information on housing options and needs.

Ms. Falcone overviewed the planning documents and acronyms that are referenced in the scope document that pertain to the visioning. Ms. Sommer asked if these documents would be summarized and Ms. Falcone responded that they would be. Mr. Cynkar conveyed that the Harding Property should be included in this list.

Mr. Mottley stated that a one year budget is a snapshot and asked if there is information on financial trends. Ms. Stewart explained that there is a narrative summary explaining trends in the beginning of the budget documents.

Ms. Falcone asked about the stakeholder interviews and how the committee wants to handle things.

Mr. Miner clarified if Council would be interviewed and Ms. Falcone said they would be. He proposed that Visioning Committee is a single interview and Council is a single interview and then the Visioning Committee selects the other 23 interviews.

Mr. Cynkar asked if the Council interview happens after the election. Mr. Sherman expressed that they should be interviewed as a group of seven and it should come after the elections are done.

Don Mottley proposed that there be an online tool to self-select for more interviews. Ms. Falcone agreed that maybe we could get people more keyed into the process. Maybe phone interviews too. She expressed that when looking at the whole scope you will be surprised how many people will be interviewed.

Mr. Sherman explained how 54 folks put in applications to be on the Visioning Committee and we should look back and engage those folks who were not selected.

Ms. Findlay expressed that she thinks we should get some of the “not squeaky wheels” that Council has not heard from before. Those are the people who are less likely to answer a survey that pops up.

Ms. Burris asked about contacting people with cell phones. Ms. Falcone said that is contracted out to someone who has a way of getting numbers.

Mr. Mottley discussed how it is easier to schedule a phone call rather than a face to face meeting and people can feel more comfortable. We should give them an option.

Mr. Mitchell brought up how we should be tracking demographic information to make sure we have a representative sample of the community.

Ms. Findlay inquired about what questions would be asked. Ms. Falcone it would ask about ties to Worthington, key issues in the community over the next five to ten years, what brought them here, and if they plan to stay here.

Ms. Abu-Absi asked about the suggestions for people to interview. Ms. Falcone said there were ~~40-50~~ 22 from Council and the Committee and there was not a lot of overlap other than chamber people.

Mr. Miner asked if we should have a meeting to determine the group to be interviewed by Poggemeyer, by the Visioning Committee, or as a group.

Ms. Falcone suggested looking at the list of people who applied to the Visioning committee. She asked Ms. Stewart to get names, addresses, occupations, and community groups for those people.

Ms. Falcone moved on to discussing community education explaining how that was a big priority of Council.

Mr. Miner commented that they shouldn't go overboard with education. He explained how if people do not completely understand the process, we do need to educate them if our plan is dependent on the education. Some feedback may be conceptions and misconceptions. We could spend a lot of time educating and miss their ideas.

Ms. Findlay asked about past visioning processes and what lessons were learned about education.

Ms. Abu-Absi asked about the purpose of the education. Ms. Falcone explained it is about a focus on the process and people participating. Providing Fast Facts are important, and it is important that people know what can and cannot happen in a community. It helps keep people engaged and educated.

Ms. Stewart explained that it is her sense of Council's intent to educate as needed on the topics that come up within the visioning process. The group may need to educate on the framework the City has to operate within, for example the City's dependence on income taxes.

The Visioning Committee agreed to think about a few facts they think the community should know when engaging in this process.

Mr. Lees said that during conversations we may pick up the areas where we need to educate.

Ms. Falcone said based on the conversation, we will decide along the way what facts and education need to be provided.

Ms. Sommer described how community education is important because people do not know how things are funded and do not understand where their taxes go.

Mr. Miner said he could see part of visioning being people are engaged and see how the community works. Do not try to solve the lack of education with the process, it may become an action step out of the process.

Ms. Abu-Absi asked if there is a way to frame the nuts and bolts city services and come up with an infographic. We can use informational items to draw people into engagement opportunities.

Mr. Mitchell said we can use teasers throughout the community to drive people to get involved and it is a success for us to get people to the website.

Mr. Cynkar explained that the website can have facts for information such as the acreage of the UMCH site.

Mr. Melchi asked who set the goal of reaching 80% because that is extremely high. Ms. Falcone defined the 80% as reaching out and touching people in the community, but that does not mean they will all respond.

Ms. Findlay brought up how Dublin has started using blockchain bitcoins for the city. Maybe we can reach out to them and better understand their approach.

Ms. Falcone detailed Phase Two and the creation of branding for the Visioning Committee. She explained the public involvement plan options and how we hope to reach the 80% mark by doing these things.

Ms. Findlay said that a community meal would be popular. Could be something to think about because many people show up at the Picnic with the Partnership.

Mr. Mitchell brought up that there could be something done on election day to hand out information. Ms. Falcone responded that you would need have the website and survey link up by then. Ms. Stewart said we would need to find out about election rules. There was discussion about how many people could be reached considering the number of people voting absentee or early, and what time of day you would be out on election day. Mr. Mottley expressed he preferred something that people can do

immediately with an online website and a survey. Mr. Miner suggested that you could get emails to add to our contact list. Ms. Falcone said it could simply promote the process and encourage people to engage.

Ms. Falcone discussed the communication plan and explained that Council wants a monthly in person update. The communication will fall on the chair and vice chair who will take the lead on the communication plan. She asked when the committee wants to meet; we need to set the meetings up in advance. 2nd or 4th Tuesdays seemed to work for most, or we can look to the 4th Mondays.

Mr. Miner asked if October is set yet. There was some frustration that the September meetings were thrown on all of a sudden. He questioned if the Visioning Committee owns the process or not. Council created something that is supposed to be independent.

Ms. Abu-Absi said there is a confusion of roles and she asked what the Visioning Committee owns in terms of work. Ms. Falcone said that this is the Visioning Committee's baby. Ms. Abu-Absi asked who creates the "Fast Facts" Ms. Falcone said she would give the Visioning Committee a draft and then they give their input. Ms. Stewart said that staff is a resource for whatever info is needed. Ms. Falcone explained that she is in the back giving ideas and the Visioning Committee has an active role and has the final say. The City Council will have to approve the funding.

There was consensus of the Visioning Committee to meet twice a month on the 2nd Tuesday and 4th Monday starting in October on the 8th and 28th.

Mr. Miner asked if there could be a conference line for the meetings for people who cannot attend in person to call into. Ms. Stewart said that could be done, but those people can only participate in the dialogue and are unable to vote.

Mr. Mitchell asked Ms. Falcone to provide a little bit more narrative for the bullet points on the scope. Ms. Falcone referred back to the proposal, which was previously sent with more detail, but she will send it back out.

Ms. Falcone explained that next week the conversation will continue on the scope of services and there will be nominations for the chair and vice chair. She asked committee members to think about that for next time.

The meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.